



# Cannabis Clinical Guidance & Recommendations for Humboldt County Providers



For discussions with pregnant women, parents and guardians of children 0-20

It is illegal for people under the age of 21 to purchase, possess or use retail cannabis in California.

**Tips for using this guidance:** This guidance is to assist you with talking points to consider when talking with patients who use cannabis. The document is formatted to the sections based on the population (pregnant women, parents, adolescents) you're working with.

## Cannabis Screening Questions

**Please inform the patient:** Now that cannabis is legal in California, we recommend asking all parents and guardians about cannabis use and exposure. This should be done in addition to asking about alcohol, tobacco and other drug use (including prescription drugs), as well as other safety measures like seat belt use and smoke detectors.

### Sample Language for all parents:

- Now that cannabis is legal in California, we would like to talk with you about it to help you keep your children safe.
- Q1: Does anyone smoke or use Cannabis or Tobacco in your home? Does anyone else who is a caregiver for your child use cannabis or have it in their home?
  - If no: Move on to question 2.
  - If yes: When was the last time you used cannabis? How do you use cannabis? What form of cannabis do you use? How often do you use and how much?
  - If pregnant: How has your use of cannabis changed since finding out you are pregnant?
- Q2. Does anyone use cannabis in your home?
  - If yes or no: It is important to ensure that your home is safe for your child. Make sure that any potentially harmful substances are out of reach of your child, including cannabis, alcohol, prescription drugs or household substances.
  - If yes: Provide additional education on avoidance of secondhand smoke and safe storage of cannabis.



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- **If the provider is concerned about substance use-**
- After screening the patient if the provider is concerned about substance use. Then use an evidence based assessment tool (ASSIST, CRAFFT or DAST10) in order to determine proper level of care for an individual with substance use disorder. Check with your agency on what tool is being used to assess substance use disorder.
- The Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test (CUDIT) and referral recommendations is a specific tool that can be used to assess Cannabis use. More information can be found in the resources section of the document.





### Prenatal/OB Visits

- Please inform the patient: Cannabis is now legal for adults over 21. But this doesn't mean it is safe for pregnant moms or babies.
- Discuss importance of cessation of cannabis and other potentially harmful substances during pregnancy and breastfeeding and offer support if needed (see resource section).
- It is important to assess substance use throughout a women's pregnancy. Use the 4p's tool at intake and at the third trimester. Assessment of substance throughout the women's pregnancy will help to identify women that may have begun or resume use of substances during their pregnancy.
- **Discuss patient's plan for cannabis use after pregnancy.** Tell me about whether you intend to use cannabis after delivering your baby?
- **Discuss breastfeeding and cannabis:** Are you planning to breastfeed your child? If yes, see breastfeeding section for more information.

### Alternatives to Cannabis Use during Pregnancy

Nausea during pregnancy is typically one of the most common pregnancy-related symptoms woman report. Although nausea is uncomfortable is not typically harmful to the mother or baby. For women that do experience nausea or vomiting, there are certain foods, beverages and eating habits that help to relieve nausea or help replace what they lose if vomiting. For specific recommendations, see the resources section.

Anxiety is another common symptom reported by pregnant women. The following list provides tips for coping with anxiety and pregnancy.

- Talk about it
- Move your mind
- Rest up
- Write about it
- Move your body
- Empower yourself
- Ask your doctor



For additional information or specific recommendations on coping with anxiety, see the resources section.

### Postpartum Screening Questions

**Please inform the patient:** Now that cannabis is legal for adult use (21 years and older) in California, we are asking all parents about cannabis because we want to help you keep your kids safe.

- Before you knew you were pregnant how much cannabis did you use?
- How much cannabis did you use during your pregnancy?
- How much cannabis have you used since the birth of your child?
- Does anyone use cannabis in your home?
- Are you currently or planning to breastfeed?



### Reproductive Health

Discuss contraception options if patient wants to continue recreational or medical cannabis, alcohol or other substance use and/or does not desire pregnancy. If patient desires a pregnancy, discuss importance of cessation of cannabis and other potentially harmful substances. Consider use of contraception while the patient is working towards cessation of substances. Long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARC) are the preferred form of contraception in women using substances who don't desire pregnancy as most pregnancies in women who have substance use disorders are unplanned (>80%) and contraceptive methods that have a higher failure rate or are more dependent on the patient (e.g. taking a pill daily) can be problematic when judgment may be impaired due to substance use.



### Infant and Baby

#### At Delivery/ Post-Partum Screening

**Please inform the patient:** Now that cannabis is legal for adult use (21 years and older) in California, we are asking all parents about cannabis because we want to help keep your kids safe.

Discuss risks regarding cannabis use after pregnancy and/or during breastfeeding with your patient.

Use cannabis screening questions at delivery. (See screening questions for prenatal or OB/visit)

- Before you knew you were pregnant how much cannabis did you use?
- How much cannabis did you use during your pregnancy?
- How much cannabis have you used since the birth of your child?
- Does anyone smoke or use cannabis in your home?
- Are you currently breastfeeding your infant?

#### Breastfeeding and Cannabis

Cannabis use should be addressed in a discussion of breastfeeding plans, especially if the mother used prior to pregnancy or during pregnancy. However, any THC consumed by the mother enters her breast milk and can be passed from the mother's milk to her baby, potentially affecting the baby.

#### Language for patients:

- Breastfeeding has many health benefits for both the baby and the mother.
- THC in cannabis gets into breast milk and may affect your baby.
- THC is stored in the body in fat, and babies have a high percentage of body fat, including in their developing brains. Because THC is stored in fat, it remains in the body for a long time and can be transferred to your baby. This means that “pumping and dumping” your breast will not work the same way it does with alcohol. Alcohol is not stored in fat cells so it leaves the body faster.
- Because of the potential risks to the baby, the American Academy of Pediatrics states that cannabis should not be used while breastfeeding.



While there are gaps in research, there is enough research to confirm the following information about breastfeeding and cannabis use, including: THC transfers to the breast milk. It is unknown how long after any use of cannabis that it is safe to breastfeed or how long THC remains in breast milk after occasional cannabis use as compared to regular use. We don't know how long it takes for THC to clear from the breast milk. Some mothers may be motivated to “pump and dump” their breast milk in order to maintain milk production while waiting for THC to be eliminated from breast milk, but this may not be effective at preventing exposure for the infant.



### Safe Sleep Practices

Some parents choose to sleep with their infants. Sleeping with your infant while under the influence of substances including cannabis, can create an unsafe sleeping environment. Which increases the risk of death. Therefore, when anyone sharing a sleeping environment with you infant it is best to separate the sleeping environment.

Recommendations for creating a safe sleep environment would be to:

- Place your baby on his or her back for all sleep times—naps and night.
- Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib.
- Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, and soft toys out of baby's sleep area.
- Have baby share your room, not your bed.





### Young Children Age 0-8

**Please inform the patient:** now that cannabis is legal for adult use (21 years and older) in California, we are asking all parents about cannabis be-cause we want to help keep your kids safe.

#### Talking points for discussion with all parents:

- The brain is still developing and growing until about age 25.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in cannabis that makes a person feel “high.” THC is psychoactive, meaning it affects the brain.
- Because cannabis affects the brain, it can have harmful effects on youth brain development. For the best chance of healthy brain development and to allow youth to reach their full potential, youth of any age should not use cannabis.
- It is illegal to give retail or recreational cannabis to anyone under the age of 21.



**For parents of children age 0-8:** Encourage parents to talk to their children about safe habits when visiting another person’s home. Talk to young children about not eating or drinking anything without permission especially if they are in other people’s homes.

### Accidental Ingestion and Safe Storage

Even though cannabis is legal for adults, children often have accidental ingestions. Education to parents on safe storage practices for cannabis, medications, alcohol and other potentially harmful substances.

Evidence shows that more unintentional cannabis exposures of children occur in states with increased legal access to cannabis and the exposures can lead to significant clinical effects requiring medical attention.

Evidence shows that use of child-resistant packaging reduces unintentional pediatric poisonings from a wide range of hazardous household products including pharmaceutical products. In California, all cannabis products are required to leave the store in child-resistant packaging. However, child-resistant packaging is not child-proof. It is meant to keep children up to age 5 from accessing potentially hazardous substances.

### Accidental Ingestion for Children 0-8 years of age

#### Talking points for discussion with parents of children 0-8:

- Now that cannabis is legal, it is more common in homes. This means children are more likely to accidentally eat or drink cannabis.
- Children may be curious and confuse cannabis products for regular food or candy. If a child eats or drinks cannabis by accident, it can make them sick. Some may even need to go to the hospital.
  - Children that eat or drink cannabis may have problems walking or sitting up and they may start to be sleepy. Sometimes they can become so sleepy that they may start to have trouble breathing



- If a child accidentally ingests a cannabis-infused product, symptoms may include drowsiness, unsteady walking, difficulty sitting up or irregular breathing.
- If an older individual accidentally ingests a cannabis-infused product or uses too much cannabis, symptoms may include extreme confusion, anxiety, panic or paranoia, fast heart rate, hallucinations or delusions or severe nausea or vomiting.
- If an individual accidentally ingests a cannabis-infused product or uses too much cannabis and experiences symptoms, call the Poison Control Hotline for free, fast, expert help: 1-800-222-1222. If the symptoms are severe, call 911 or go to an emergency room.

### Safe Storage of cannabis

#### Talking points for discussion with parents:

Remember that kids can get into all kinds of things that you assume are out of reach or not of interest.

- Like household chemicals or bleach, cannabis, alcohol and some medications that are dangerous for children.
- Keep all potentially harmful substances in a locked area, out of sight and out of reach of children.
  - Lock boxes or locked cabinets are examples of safe storage options.
  - If you don't have a locked area, make sure products are out of reach and out of sight of children.
  - Keep in mind, safe storage for young children may not stop older children or teens.
- Research shows that child-resistant packaging can protect young children from dangerous items like medication.
  - If you buy cannabis products and bring them into your home, keep them in the child-resistant packaging from the store to help prevent accidents.
- Child-resistant packaging is not child-proof. Be sure to keep cannabis products in the child-resistant package and stored in a locked area, out of reach and out of sight of children.
  - If your child is 5 years or older, child-resistant packaging will not keep kids away from cannabis. This why it is important to store all cannabis products in a locked area out of sight and reach of children.





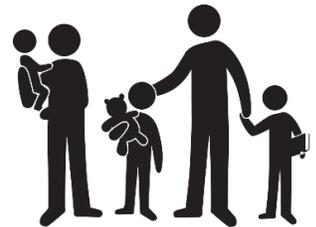
### Youth and Adolescents 9-20 years of age

Adolescents and young adults who regularly use cannabis are more likely than non-users to have impairment of cognitive and academic abilities for at least 28 days after last use. They are more likely than non-users to increase their use and to become addicted to cannabis in adulthood, and are more likely than non-users to use and be addicted to alcohol, tobacco or illicit drugs in adulthood. Adolescents who regularly use cannabis are less likely than non-users to graduate from high school.

**For parents of children age 9-20:** Encourage parents to talk to their adolescent early and often about the risks of using marijuana and other substances. It is important to talk with your teen about cannabis, alcohol, prescription drugs and illicit drug use early and often.

#### Talking points for discussion with all parents:

- The brain is still developing and growing until about age 25.
- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the chemical in cannabis that makes a person feel “high.” THC is psychoactive, meaning it affects the brain.
- Because cannabis affects the brain, it can have harmful effects on youth brain development. For the best chance of healthy brain development and to allow youth to reach their full potential, youth of any age should not use cannabis.
- It is illegal to give retail or recreational cannabis to anyone under the age of 21.
- Youth who use marijuana regularly are more likely to have a hard time learning, problems remembering and lower math and reading scores.
- Youth who start using marijuana are more likely to become addicted in the future. It is harder to stop using marijuana if started at a young age.
- Youth who start using marijuana, alcohol, or other drugs may be more likely to continue using later in life.
- Youth who use marijuana regularly may be less likely to graduate from high school.



### Accidental or Intentional Ingestion Children and Adolescents

Evidence shows that more unintentional cannabis exposures of children occur in states with increased legal access to cannabis and the exposures can lead to significant clinical effects requiring medical attention.

If an individual accidentally ingests a cannabis-infused product or uses too much cannabis and experiences symptoms, call the Poison Control Hotline for free, fast, expert help: 1-800-222-1222. If the symptoms are severe, call 911 or go to an emergency room.

#### Talking points for discussion with parents:

- If a child or teen eats or drinks cannabis by accident or on purpose, it may make them feel sick. They may seem confused, anxious, panicked or feel paranoid. They also may have a faster than normal heart rate, have hallucinations or delusions or nausea or vomiting.



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- If an older individual accidentally ingests a cannabis-infused product or uses too much cannabis, symptoms may include extreme confusion, anxiety, panic or paranoia, fast heart rate, hallucinations or delusions or severe nausea or vomiting.
- If you are worried, call the Poison Control Hotline as soon as possible. Calling is free and you will be helped quickly: 1-800-222-1222. If symptoms seem bad, call 911 or go to an emergency room right away.

### Safe Storage Tips

Educate parents on safe storage practices for cannabis, medications, alcohol and other potentially harmful substances. Note that as children get older, safe storage alone may not be enough to prevent adolescents and young adults from accessing substances in the home. This is why it is important for parents and guardians to have open, honest conversations with children as they get older.

#### Talking points for discussion with parents:

- Make sure to store any cannabis, alcohol or prescription drugs in a locked area so your child cannot get to them.
- Be sure those items are securely locked, not just out-of-sight. Lock boxes or locked cabinets are examples of safe storage options.
- As youth get older, they may get into items you think are safely stored. This is why it is also important to talk to youth about the risks of using those substances.
- If you have homemade cannabis products, make sure it is clearly labeled that it contains cannabis and keep them locked similar to alcohol. If you are making edibles in your home, make sure the process takes place away from adolescents.
- California law has rules if you grow cannabis in your home.
- If children are in the home, the retail (recreational) cannabis grow must be in a separate, enclosed and locked area. Medical cannabis growers should follow the same precautions to prevent access by a child or adolescent.





### Parenting

#### Parenting and Cannabis Use

Cannabis use can affect a person’s ability to make decisions. This can affect a person’s ability to care for a child. It is important to know that the acute effects of cannabis use can last 8 hours or more. It is appropriate for parents to ask about cannabis or other substance use before letting a person care for a child.

#### Talking points for discussion:

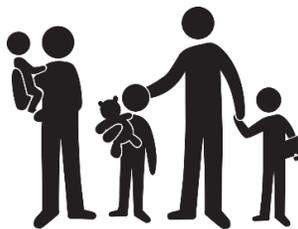
- Be aware of your impairment while caring for a child. Cannabis can affect your ability to make decisions for 8 hours or more after use. So even if you don’t still feel high, cannabis may affect your judgment.
- Being high or even buzzed while caring for a child is not safe. Do not let anyone who is under the influence of cannabis take care of your child.

#### Talking points for discussion about safe sleeping environments.

- It is not safe for a baby or young child to sleep with an adult, especially if they are high or are under the influence of cannabis.
- Sleeping with your infant while under the influence of substances including cannabis, can create an unsafe sleeping environment. Which increases the risk of death. Therefore, when anyone sharing a sleeping environment with you infant it is best to separate the sleeping environment.
- Creating a safe sleep environment for your infant:
  - Place your baby on his or her back for all sleep times—naps and night.
  - Use a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a safety-approved crib.
  - Keep soft bedding such as blankets, pillows, bumper pads, and soft toys out of baby's sleep area.
  - Have baby share your room, not your bed.
  - Be sure to put your baby on their own sleeping surface.

#### Talking points for discussion for parents of children/adolescents 9-20 y/o:

- Set a good example and create a safe environment for your child. Actions speak louder than words. Do not use cannabis, alcohol or other drugs around children.





### Driving and Cannabis

California law (CA Vehicle Code 23152f) states that it is illegal to drive under the influence of marijuana, but does not give a specific THC blood levels cut off. In California, it is illegal to use cannabis in a vehicle and the open container law applies to cannabis.

#### Talking points for discussion with all parents:

- Cannabis can affect your ability to make decisions. These effects can last 8 hours or more after use, even if you don't feel high anymore.
- Being high or buzzed can make some activities more dangerous. Driving a car while under the influence of cannabis is illegal and is not safe for the driver or the passengers.
- Do not let your child ride in a car if the driver is high or before the effects of cannabis have worn off.
  - Do not let youth ride in a car if the driver is high or has recently used cannabis.
  - Tell children and teens not to ride in a car if the driver is high or has recently used cannabis.
  - Talk to them about planning a safe ride home instead of getting into a car with a driver who has used cannabis, alcohol or other drugs.
- When your teen starts to drive, let them know that if they use cannabis and drive, they can get a DUI or lose their license. The consequences are the same if they use cannabis before riding a scooter or bike.
  - Talk to teens about planning a safe way to get home if they have used cannabis, alcohol or other drugs





### Medical Cannabis

Medical cannabis is legal for anyone over age 18 in California that has the appropriate documented diagnosis of one of the approved medical conditions. If a youth under the age of 18 has a medical cannabis card with parent consent, let parents know that there may be other options that are safer ways to treat these medical-conditions. Discuss the risks/benefits of cannabis use by youth and potential alternatives, as appropriate.

#### Language for parents of medical cannabis patients:

- The decision to use medical cannabis (as with any medication) is based on if the benefits of the treatment outweigh the potential risks to the young person. That is something we should discuss (or you can further discuss with your child’s primary health care provider).
- Can you tell me about why you are using medical cannabis to treat your child?
- How does medical cannabis help your child?
- How do you feel about your son or daughter using medical cannabis?
- Has your son or daughter’s health condition improved with medical cannabis use?
- Have there been any problems with his or her medical cannabis use?





### Resources

For health care providers:

- Nausea During Pregnancy: Causes, Management and Concerns  
<https://americanpregnancy.org/pregnancy-health/nausea-during-pregnancy>
- 7 Tips for Coping with Anxiety During Pregnancy  
<https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/anxiety-coping-tips#causes>
- A Population-Based Analysis of the Relationship Between Substance Use and Adolescent Cognitive Development:  
<https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.ajp.2018.18020202>
- School achievement in 14-year old youths prenatally exposed to marijuana, Neurotoxicology and Teratology, volume 34, August 2011.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3260381>
- Mayo Clinic Natural Standard Patient Monograph Drugs & Supplements: Marijuana (Cannabis sativa), 2017.
- Marijuana use during pregnancy and lactation. The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists, Committee on Obstetric Practice Committee Opinion, #637, July 2015.  
<https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-and-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Obstetric-Practice/Marijuana-Use-During-Pregnancy-and-Lactation?IsMobileSet=false>
- Birth outcomes associated with cannabis use before and during pregnancy. Pediatric Research, February 2012.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22258135>
- The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Clinical Protocol #21: Guidelines for Breastfeeding and Substance Use or Substance Use Disorder, volume 10, #3, 2015.  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4378642>
- Let's Talk Cannabis- California Department of Public Health.  
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/DO/letstalkcannabis/pages/letstalkcannabis.aspx>
- Humboldt Community Resource List - SUD Treatment Centers

For patients/families:

- MotherToBaby Medications & More During Pregnancy & Breastfeeding Ask The Experts:  
<https://mothertobaby.org>
- Infant Risk Center Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center:  
<https://www.infantrisk.com>, Hotline: 1 (806) 352-2519

